

Press Release

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SCHAKOWSKY SAYS BUSH VETO SNUFFS OUT HOPES OF MILLIONS OF AMERICANS, IMPERILS FUTURE OF MEDICINE IN AMERICA

Rises in support of override of President's veto of life-saving stem cell research

WASHINGTON, DC -- U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky today issued the following statement on the House vote and President Bush's veto to cut off stem cell research that could provide life-changing medical breakthroughs for millions of Americans:

Mr. Speaker, I stand today in strong support of a veto override for H.R. 810, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act. It is clear that a majority of Americans and a bi-partisan majority in Congress strongly support embryonic stem cell research because it could prove to be critical for some 128 million Americans who suffer from juvenile diabetes, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, cancer, heart disease, spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, and other diseases.

Stem cell research is essential for the future of medicine in America; one that should be allowed to transcend political lines so that critical gains can be made to save millions of human lives. One such life is that of my constituent, twenty-four year old Bishoy Abo-Saif. In his letter to me, Bishoy described his daily struggle with cerebral palsy. He has been to Canada, the United Kingdom, Hungary, Poland and the Ukraine looking for alternative therapies for his disease. Nothing has worked. Even though he has accomplished academic goals, he still feels he is on the sidelines. As he stated to me, "the wheelchair is always in the way." However, he said that, "stem cell treatment is the only hope to overcome his condition."

Most scientists agree that embryonic stem cell research offers the greatest hope to people like Bishoy. America has always been on the cutting edge of new innovation and now we stand on the brink of groundbreaking medical advancements that would dramatically alter the lives of people such as Bishoy. We must not prohibit this promising research.

But the opponents of this measure have put forward disingenuous arguments that fly in the face of widely accepted scientific research and proven potential. They wrongly portray the decision on funding for additional stem cell research as a choice between one life or another. In fact, we are choosing between disposing of embryonic stem cells or using those cells to save countless lives and advance life-saving science in previously unrealized ways. It is incomprehensible that

anyone would allow politics and personal preference to trump hard facts and science. And, like the overwhelming majority of Americans, I am deeply disappointed and dismayed over President Bush's decision to issue his first veto on this bill, dashing the hopes so many families who are battling critical illnesses have pinned on the promising potential of stem cell research.

President Bush acted to snuff out the hopes of millions of Americans only to please a small right-wing constituency which has politicized this medical issue. Once again, the Bush Administration has put politics before science sadly taking hope and health away from countless families. We should not delay or deny the potentially lifesaving research offered by stem cell technology. Bishoy and millions of other Americans are counting on us. As Bishoy stated in his letter, "our hopes and dreams are in your hands, please do not shatter them. Allow me and others to regain what we have lost."

I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on the veto override to H.R. 810.